Covid: Deaths Surpass 500K as Overall Cases Drop, Herd Immunity Approaching, Wuhan Origins, Vaccines

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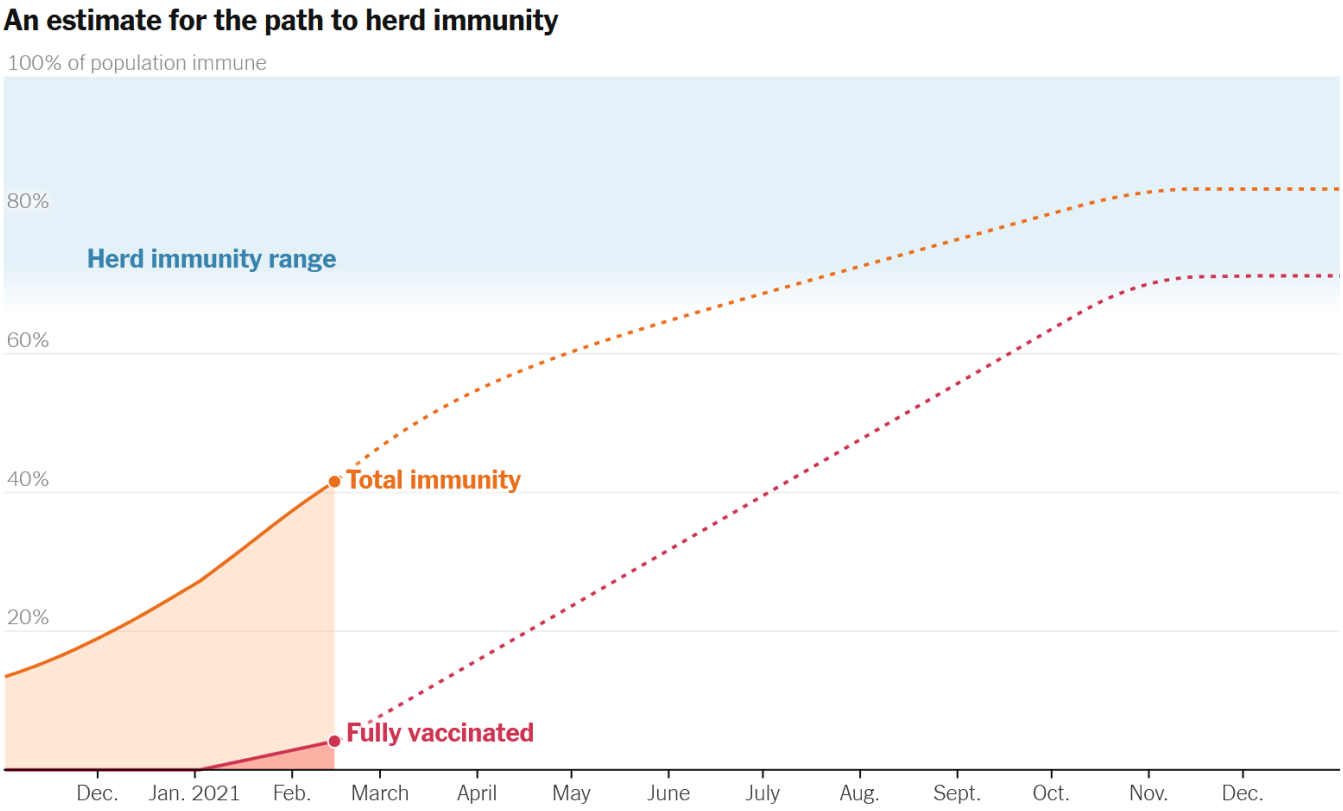

I want to take a look at some Coronavirus news, much of which is looking good. Despite the United States surpassing over a half-million deaths, experts are optimistic given an overall drop in cases.

> Why are COVID-19 cases dropping? Here's what observers say could be playing a part:
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> • stronger public-health measures;
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> • stricter adherence to the rules borne out of fear of faster-spreading variants;
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> • the natural seasonality of coronaviruses. In countries with relatively high rates of vaccination and #coronavirus infection, such as the United States and Britain, immunity could also be starting to slow the spread.In the past 6 weeks, new global coronavirus infections have dropped by nearly half:
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> • 5M in the first week of Jan., to
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> • 2.7M in the final week of the month
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> In countries where post-holiday surges were particularly steep, governments imposed stringent public-health measures that led to an equally steep drop in cases. The lockdowns, coupled with fear of new COVID-19 variants, could help explain the drop. The natural seasonality of SARS-CoV-2 could be another factor:• The 4 seasonal coronaviruses tend to peak in winter and early spring. But attributing the seasonal effect for the drop in COVID-19 cases is "a pipe dream," said professor of medicine and epidemiology Peter Juni. Also unlikely is the idea that immunity – by vaccination or infection – is the reason for the drop in Canada. With only 3.4 vaccine doses injected for every 100 Canadians and fewer than 900,000 infections, the vast majority of Canadians are susceptible.

There is question whether the recession of cases will last, but again, optimism is in the air. Even the newer variants cropping up in parts of the world are not concerning experts, as it seems the rollout of vaccines are effective. The political scene is awash in speculation as to the origins of the virus, with no clear answers after multiple investigations. Several scenarios were presented by experts, the most unlikely of which, in their opinion, being the "from a lab" theory.

> In the first, a single person was exposed to SARS-CoV-2 through direct contact with the host species, the horseshoe bat. The virus could have been circulating in humans for a while before making its breakthrough in heavily populated Wuhan. The second scenario, seen as the most likely, involves transmission to humans via an as yet unknown intermediary species…pangolins were potential candidates but other animals – including mink and even cats – may also be reservoirs. A third possibility is that COVID-19 originated under the first or second scenarios and was then transmitted via cold chain products…imported frozen food and have raised the possibility it might also have caused the Wuhan outbreak. The final scenario is that SARS-CoV-2 was leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, which is known to have studied captive coronaviruses. Ben Embarek…said, but it was "very unlikely" in this case. China has expressed concern that any investigation would be "politicised", and said it would only cooperate if it was clear it would not be expected to take blame for the pandemic. By ruling out the lab leak and accepting that COVID-19 could have originated outside of China, the WHO team has not crossed any of Beijing's lines. China would also be heartened that the WHO team is considering the cold-chain theory. But the findings are unlikely to satisfy those who believe China is culpable and has covered up evidence.

China obviously has a vested interest in protecting themselves from blame, and the political nature of this volley-ball will not assuage those of a more conspiratorial mind. While I don't deny the slimy nature of the Chinese people, I actually need evidence that this was a bioweapon, intended to cost Trump the election and shutdown the world, before I believe that. I, of course, saved the best for last, which is the question of herd immunity and when it will be reached. This is the most crucial of questions, as it will determine when the lockdowns, mask wearing and general all out precautionary insanity will end so we can all go on with our lives. Caution with optimistic predictions is in order, as false hope is not healthy for anyone, but all indications tend towards the end of the year at worst and next few months at best.

> The exact threshold for herd immunity for the coronavirus is unknown, but recent estimates range from 70 percent to 90 percent. At first, this looks like pretty good news — under these assumptions, we could reach herd immunity as early as July. But a lot could happen between now and then. The speed and uptake of vaccination, and how long immunity lasts are big factors. The rise of new virus variants and how we respond to them will also affect the path to herd immunity. In most scenarios, millions more people will become infected and tens or hundreds of thousands more will die before herd immunity is reached.

While officials say by summer, we could be at herd immunity, expect the stupid American public and incompetent leaders to do something to halt that progress. This is no the time for complacency; if anything, we should double down: wear masks, social distance, avoid unnecessary gatherings and get vaccinated when you can, all measures that will speed up our seeing light at the end of the tunnel. My prediction is that by the end of year, most if not all of the safety measures will be able to be dispensed with, life can go back to normal, as much as that is possible. What must follow the start of life as usual is government programs to put the tens of millions of Americans back to work and in financial stability who have permanently lost jobs, loved ones, businesses or their health. I don't expect Biden to have an FDR moment, but if he does, he will be fondly remembered in the history books.

Links

Cases thread: https://twitter.com/globeandmail/status/1362104262763896833
Archive: https://archive.vn/q3y0J

Explainer: The WHO's theories about the origins of COVID-19 after Wuhan probe
Reuters: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-who-china-explaine/explainer-the-whos-theories-about-the-origins-of-covid-19-after-wuhan-probe-idUSKBN2AA0QK
Archive: https://archive.vn/0cK9E

U.S. surpasses 500,000 Covid deaths
Politico: https://www.politico.com/news/2021/02/22/us-500-000-covid-deaths-470927
Archive: https://archive.vn/B0vh1

The Pandemic Is Receding in the Worst Hotspots. Will It Last?
NY Times: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/02/22/world/coronavirus-world-turnaround.html
Archive: https://archive.vn/4TwdU

A Ripple Effect of Loss: U.S. Covid Deaths Approach 500,000
NY Times: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/21/us/coronavirus-deaths-us-half-a-million.html
Archive: https://archive.vn/7GcFx

Why experts aren't panicking about new coronavirus variants
LA Times: https://www.latimes.com/science/story/2021-02-10/why-scientists-are-not-panicking-about-new-coronavirus-variants
Archive: https://archive.vn/Br3k0

Worldwide thread: https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/1363919005493456897
Archive: https://archive.vn/GiQPf

Trends in Number of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in the US Reported to CDC, by State/Territory
CDC: https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_dailytrendscases
Archive: https://archive.vn/buyce

Global COVID-19 cases have dropped by half, and experts are looking for explanations
Globe and Mail: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-why-the-number-of-covid-19-cases-is-dropping-globally/
Archive: https://archive.vn/V0nLs

The fight to overcome vaccine hesitancy among African Americans
Financial Times: https://www.ft.com/content/515d3949-4379-42db-aa69-f11ffa116e39
Archive: https://archive.vn/oXtJ0

Blacks thread: https://twitter.com/FinancialTimes/status/1364587234582794240
Archive: https://archive.vn/mvf50

The Vaccine Had to Be Used. He Used It. He Was Fired.
NY Times: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/10/us/houston-doctor-fired-covid-vaccine.html
Archive: https://archive.vn/s4JrY

Reuters thread: https://twitter.com/Reuters/status/1359487692640309253
Archive: https://archive.vn/BB5KZ

Can I gather with friends and family after getting the COVID-19 vaccine? Can I travel? Here are what health experts say.
USA Today: https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2021/02/11/covid-vaccine-can-see-friends-family-after-getting-vaccinated/4404635001/
Archive: https://archive.vn/evnst

Death toll thread: https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/1363556961996869633
Archive: https://archive.vn/I5xgS

The brutal COVID-19 surge that killed so many is now helping to create herd immunity
LA Times: https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-20/covid-19-pandemic-herd-immunity-vaccinations-plummeting-cases
Archive: https://archive.vn/bUw1B

Cases plummet thread: https://twitter.com/latimes/status/1363206367981395971
Archive: https://archive.vn/nCQUi

When Could the United States Reach Herd Immunity? It’s Complicated.
NY Times: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/02/20/us/us-herd-immunity-covid.html
Archive: https://archive.vn/vepUf

Herd immunity thread: https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/1363201780314755083
Archive: https://archive.vn/CwP8m